

Briefing: Analysis of evidence on potential migration from Bulgaria and Romania

Claim: A net 50,000-300,000 new migrants will arrive in the UK from Romania and Bulgaria each year

Claim Sources:

- Migration Watch's [central projection is a net increase of 50,000](#) per year, adding 250,000 to the UK population over 5 years
- Conservative MP Philip Hollobone predicted [135,000 per year](#) over the first two years in a speech in the House of Commons (04/12/12)
- UKIP MEP Godfrey Bloom cited a figure of [1.5m potentially arriving](#). Assuming this is over 5 years rather than just in 2014, this would equate to 300,000 net arrivals into the UK each year (14/01/13)

Current evidence

- Currently 96% of Romanian migrants to EU countries choose destinations other than the UK. The UK has 80,000 of 2.12m Romanian migrants in the EU. Italy and Spain have over 10 times the numbers of Romanian migrants (888,000 and 823,000 respectively) while Germany has 160,000 Romanian migrants (source: Eurostat)
- 94% of Bulgarian migrants to the EU countries currently choose destinations other than the UK. The UK has 26,000 of 437,000 Bulgarian migrants in the EU. The UK is the 5th most popular destination for Bulgarian migrants in the EU: Spain has 168,000, Germany 66,000, Greece 55,000 and Italy 46,000 (source: Eurostat)
- Much is made of the pull factor of higher income levels in driving potential Romanian and Bulgarian migration to the UK. This is undoubtedly an issue with the latest figures for median hourly earnings¹ in Britain €12.62 compared to €1.96 for Romania and €1.52 for Bulgaria (source: Eurostat)
- However, the equivalent figure in Denmark is €24.97 and the Danes were the only country to allow Romanian and Bulgarian migrants full access in 2009, while all other countries maintained transitional controls. The latest OECD figures highlight the impact of this relaxation in controls for Denmark in 2010 was an extra 2,500 Romanian and 1,200 Bulgarian migrants
- Based on current migration patterns, a net extra 50,000 migrants coming to the UK each year for five years would require a total of 22% of Romania's population and 15% of

¹ For businesses with 10 or more employees

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Bulgaria's population to leave their countries² for other EU states. While theoretically possible, this level of migration would be unprecedented in the EU

- Most recently, there has been some indication that the numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians coming to the UK is increasing *ahead* of the removal of transitional controls. Data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) has highlighted how the number of Romanians and Bulgarians in employment in the UK has risen by 36% over the past year from 104,000 in Q2 2012 to 141,000 in Q2 2013 (figures released August 2013)
- The figures seem to suggest a large rise, but we need to be careful in drawing too many conclusions from the LFS for two reasons:
 - Small sample size - Only 180 respondents were used to extrapolate these particular figures. According to the Office for National Statistics, the margin of error on the sample is plus or minus 30,000. This means the actual result found by the Labour Force Survey is that the numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians in employment in Britain is somewhere in the range 111,000 to 171,000
 - LFS definition of migrants - The LFS will include Romanians and Bulgarians who are here for short term seasonal work of six months or less. The government's net migration figures only include people migrating to Britain for a year or more. This means the LFS will inflate the potential total of migrants, as defined by the government, by including those who are here for short periods

Migration Matters Trust assessment

- Three pieces of evidence are persuasive:
 - The overwhelming majority of Romanians and Bulgarian migrants currently go to other EU countries
 - Denmark, with its high wages and generous welfare state, experienced only a small increase in migration, even though it was the only EU country to relax transitional controls
 - Unlike 2004, when the UK relaxed transitional controls but most EU states didn't, every country is making the same change at the same time, including Spain, Italy and Germany which have historically been the preferred destinations for Romanian and

² Assumes the 50,000 is made of 38,000 Romanians and 12,000 Bulgarians, reflecting the proportions of their populations 22m for Romania and 7m for Bulgaria. Calculation uses current migration patterns to work out the total number that must leave Romania and Bulgaria. If the UK is the destination for 4% of Romanian migration to the EU, and the UK receives net 38,000 Romanian migrants, then the total leaving Romania will be 950,000 which is just under 5% of the population. If the UK is the destination for 6% of Bulgarian migrants to the EU, and the UK receives net 12,000 Bulgarian migrants, then the total leaving Bulgaria will be 200,000 which is 3% of the population

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Bulgarian migrants

- The LFS figures give pause for thought but the large margin of error from such a small sample size and the potential over-statement of migrant numbers (through the inclusion of short term migrants) mean its predictive value is uncertain
- Based on this evidence, our assessment is that net migration from Bulgaria and Romania will certainly increase over current levels and be clearly evident in the official statistics
- However, our analysis suggests that scenarios with over one hundred thousand new migrants arriving each year are wide of the mark
- Our expectation is that net migration from Romania and Bulgaria to the UK will average 20,000 or less per year over the period 2014-2019
- There is one important caveat to this:
 - Currently there are several thousand Romanian and Bulgarian workers in the UK on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS). They are not counted in the migration figures because under SAWS they are in the country for under a year
 - As of the start of next year, the current SAWS scheme will cease and depending on the numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians in the country at the time on SAWS, there could be an initial spike in numbers of migrants staying on. The Migration Matters Trust view on migration is on new arrivals to the UK, not a re-classification of migrants who are already here that extend their stay

For further information contact the Migration Matters Trust at info@migrationmatterstrust.co.uk